

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-05 IO-10 /073 W

----- 020744

R 140914Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7535

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 355

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJECT: THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT

SUMMARY: THE IRMAK GOVT IS CONSTRICTED IN ITS ABILITY TO RULE TURKEY BECAUSE OF ITS PRECARIOUS POLITICAL POSITION. IT ALSO FACES SUBSTANTIAL PARLIAMENTARY OBSTACLES TO INTRODUCING LEGISLATION. THESE CONSTRAINTS ARE REINFORCED BY IRMAK'S RETIRING PERSONALITY AND THE UNWILLINGNESS OF SOME MINISTERS TO TAKE CONTROVERSIAL STEPS. PRES KORUTURK CAN DO LITTLE TO BOOST THE PRESTIGE OF THE GOVT. NONETHELESS THE GOVT CAN HANDLE MANY OF ITS DAY-TO-DAY PROBLEMS WITH REASONABLE EFFICIENCY. IN FOREIGN POLICY, IN PARTICULAR, IT HAS SOME SCOPE FOR ACTION. THERE IS A ROUGH CONSENSUS OF THE CYPRUS ISSUE, AND THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IS INTERESTED IN SEEING PROGRESS TOWARD A SOLUTION. WHILE ANKARA CAN PRESS THE PACE OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GREEK SIDE AND REACH SOME LIMITED AGREEMENTS, DOMESTIC PARTISAN CONSIDERATIONS MILITATE AGAINST THE IRMAK GOVT'S FEELING ITSELF ABLE TO CONCLUDE FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SUCH A FINAL SOLUTION WOULD REQUIRE EITHER SOME BROADLY-BACKED PARTY COALITION OR A SINGLE-PARTY GOVT

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FORMED AFTER NEW ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE IRMAK GOVT IS MORE CONSTRICTED IN ITS ABILITY TO GOVERN TURKEY THAN PREVIOUS CABINETS HAVE BEEN, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF ITS PRECARIOUS POLITICAL POSITION. WHILE IRMAK PERSONALLY HAS NOT BEEN THE OBJECT OF CRITICISM, THERE IS A PROFOUND UNDERCURRENT OF DISCONTENT IN PARLIAMENT THAT A GOVT WHICH HAS FAILED TO GET A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE HAS REMAINED SO LONG IN OFFICE. THE HIGHLY PUBLICIZED MANEUVERING OF THE PARTIES TO FORM A PARLIAMENTARY-BASED CABINET SIGN-

IFICANTLY UNDERCUTS THE AUTHORITY OF THE INCUMBENTS. AND THE CONTINUING POSSIBILITY THAT A NEW CABINET COULD BE FORMED FAIRLY SOON CONTRIBUTES TO THE USUAL PARALYSIS OF THE CIVIL SERVANTS UNDER CARETAKER REGIMES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE SOME REPORTS THAT THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY (RPP) WOULD SUPPORT A RESTRUCTURED GOVT UNDER IRMAK PROVIDED PARLIAMENT AGREED TO HOLD ELECTIONS IN JUNE 1975; THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY LIKewise MIGHT ACCEPT IRMAK AS A NEUTRAL PRIME MINISTER OF A SEVERL-PARTY COALITION. BUT UNDER PRESENT CONDITIONS, NEITHER PARTY IS READY TO SUPPORT THE IRMAK CABINET.

2. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL PARLIAMENTARY OBSTACLES TO THE SMOOTH CONDUCT OF GOVT BY THE IRMAK REGIME. LACKING A PARLIAMENTARY BASE, IT CAN SUBMIT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS ONLY IF THESE ARE CERTIFIED URGENT; ITS BILLS MAY BE SCREENED OUT BY THE APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF PARLIAMENT WITHOUT EVER BEING BROUGHT UP FOR CONSIDERATION. THE SUBMISSION OF THE REQUIRED BUDGET PROPOSALS HAS ALREADY PRODUCED PROCEDURAL WRANGLES. IN ITS QUEST TO FORCE EARLY ELECTIONS, THE RPP IS INSISTING THAT BUDGET LEGISLATION WULD BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE BUDGET COMMITTEE MUST INCLUDE A SPECIFIED REPRESENTATION FROM THE PARTIES IN THE GOVT. ALTHOUGH THE IRMAK CABINET HAS RECENTLY ASKED PARLIAMENT TO CONSIDER URGENTLY A NUMBER OF BILLS ORIGINALLY PRESENTED BY THE ECEVIT GOT, PARLIAMENT HAS YET TO COMPLETE ACTION ON ANY OF THEM. THE SOLE LEGISLATIVE SUCCESS OF THE IRMAK CABINET TO DATE HAS BEEN THE RESTORATION OF THE RIGHTS OF ROMER MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY OF THE MENDERES ERA, A BILL WARMLY ENDORSED BY MOST PARLIAMENTARIANS.

3. THE CONSTRAINTS ON THE ADMINISTRATION ARE REINFOCED BY IRMAK'S RETIRING PERSONALITY AND THE LARGELY NON-POLITICAL NATURE OF MANY OF THE MINISTERS. IRMAK HIMSELF HAS CHOSEN LARGELY TO REMAIN OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT, MAKING ONLY SPORADIC EFFORTS TO APPEAL DIRECTLY TO THE

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TURKISH PUBLIC. SOME CAINET MINISTERS WITH POLITICAL AMBITION LIKEWISE PREFER TO AVOID POSSIBLY CONTROVERSAIL ACTION IN ORDER NOT TO ALIENATE THE MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. OTHER, NOTABLY FORMIN ESENBEL, ARE BY NATURE CAUTIOUS AND ARE HENCE RELUCTANT TO GO BEYOND THE PREVAILING CONSENSUS IN TURKEY.

4. ALTHOUGH IRMAK WAS THE PERSONAL CHOICE OF PRES KORUTURK, THE PRES IS ABLE TO DO LITTLE TO BOOST THE PRESTIGE OF THE GOVT. CONSTITUTION-

ALLY ENJOYING ONLY CEREMONIAL AUTHORITY IN THE MAIN, TURKISH PRESIDENTS HAVE DEPENDED ON THE FORCE OF PERSONALITY, CONTROL OF A POLITICAL PARTY, OR SUPPORT FROM THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT TO INFLUENCE THE POLITICAL SCENE. KORUTURK IS GENERALLY RESPECTED IN BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY CIRCLES. HOWEVER, AS A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH CIVILIANS AND MILITARY BUT THE ENTHUSIASTIC CHOICE OF NEITHER, HE HAS A LESS FIRM GRASP THAN HIS PREDECESSORS ON THESE LEVERS OF POWER. THE THREAT OF RESIGNATION REMAINS HIS MOST POTENT WEAPON; HIS DEPARTURE WOULD SERIOUSLY AGGRAVATE THE PLITICAL CRISIS, AND THE PROBLEM OF SELECTING A SUCCESSOR WOULD PROFOUNDLY EMBARRASS THE POLITICAL PARTIES AT THIS JUNCTURE. THUS FAR THE OCCASIONAL GUARDED HINTS THAT HE WAS CONSIDERING THIS COURSE HAVE HAD LITTLE DISCERNIBLE EFFECT; NOR WAS HIS NEW YEARS APPEAL FOR PARTY COOPERATION A MORE EFFECTIVE SPUR IN RESOLVING THE POLITICAL IMPASSE.

5. NONETHELESS, THE GOVT IS OPERATING WITH REASONABLE EFFICIENCY IN SOME AREAS. WHILE PARTISAN CONSIDERATIONS PUT NEW ECONOMIC PROGRAMS BEYOND THE REACH OF THE GOVT, THE CABINET HAS BEEN COPING WITH MORE ROUTINE PROBLEMS, ALTHOUGH AGAIN WITH SOME LIMITATIONS. IT HAS RECENTLY MOVED TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE MOST ANNOYING SHORTAGES OF FOODSTUFFS AND CONSUMER GOODS. THE SECURITY APPARATUS HAS LIKEWISE DEALT EFFICIENTLY WITH UNREST ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES. THE WHOLE-HEART-

ED SUPPORT OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT IN THIS EFFORT AND THE CONTINUATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN FOUR PROVINCES INCLUDING ISTANBUL NO DOUBT ASSURES THE GOVT'S CONTINUING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE AREA.

6. FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES (OR AT LEAST RESPONSES) ARE ANOTHER MATTER IN WHICH THERE IS SOME SCOPE FOR ACTION. IRMAK HAS LARGELY DEALT HIMSELF OUT OF THIS ASPECT, LEAVING THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS LARGELY IN THE HANDS OF FORMER ESENBEL. IN TURKEY A ROUGH CONSENSUS ON THE CYPRUS ISSUE EXISTS, HAMMERED OUT BY THE ECEVIT CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVT BEFORE IT LEFT OFFICE. THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, A KEY ELEMENT

OF THIS CONSENSUS, IS EVEN MORE CONCERNED THAN THE CIVILIANS OVER THE SPECTER OF U.S. MILITARY AID SUSPENSION. IT ALSO FEELS THE BURDEN OF THE COST AND THE MILITARY DISADVANTAGES OF KEEPING SO MANY MEN IN THE FIELD. INDEED, MILITARY PRESSURE FOR TURKEY TO DEAL ON CYPRUS APPEARS TO BE GROWING. AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL--RATHER THAN THE CABINET--HAS EMERGED AS THE MAIN FORUM FOR DECIDING CYPRUS POLICY

7. WHILE THE IRMAK GOVT CAN MAKE CONCESSIONARY GESTURES, PRESS THE PACE OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND EVEN REACH SOME LIMITED AGREEMENTS, PARTISAN CONSIDERATIONS MAKE IT HARD FOR THIS GOVT TO CONCLUDE A FINAL SETTLEMENT OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM. THE PARTIES CONTINUE TO SEEK POLITICAL ADVANTAGES FROM THE CYPRUS ISSUE: ECEVIT HAS GIVEN A NUMBER OF

STRONG SPEECHES RECENTLY AND TWO OF THE PARTIES COMPRISING THE "NATIONALIST FRONT" ARE MUCH MORE EXTREME. THEIR PUBLIC POSITIONS AND THE PROSPECT OF ELECTIONS WITHIN THE YEAR WOULD INCREASE THE UNWILLING-

NESS OF THE PARTIES TO AGREE TO BOTH THE TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS AND THE SURRENDER OF SOME MEASURE OF POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE TURKISH-ADMINISTERED AREA TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH THE GREEK SIDE. THE IRMAK CABINET HAS NOT WHOWN ITSELF READY OR CAPABLE TO EXERT THE LEADERSHIP REQUIRED TO BRING THE POPULACE BEHIND IT IN HIS ENDEAVOR. IN THIS SITUATION, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT A FINAL SOLUTION OF THE CYPRUS ISSUE WOULD REQUIRE EITHER SOME BROADLY BACKED PARTY COALITION OR A SINGLE-PARTY GOVT FORMED AFTER NEW ELECTIONS.
MACOMBER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL PARTIES, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ANKARA00355
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750013-1079
From: ANKARA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750155/aaaabwdw.tel
Line Count: 183
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2003 by Izenbel0>; APPROVED <08 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE IRMAK GOVERNMENT SUMMARY: THE IRMAK GOVT IS CONSTRICTED IN ITS ABILITY TO RULE TUR-
TAGS: PINT, TU, CY, GR, RPP-REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY, (ECEVIT, BULENT), (IRMAK, SADI), (KORUTURK, FAHRI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006